

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 104

JC 860 254

AUTHOR Cohen, Bill
TITLE Survey of Instructional Goals, Course Content and Pedagogy: A Case Study Conducted at Santa Monica College (Santa Monica, California), Spring, 1986.
INSTITUTION Center for the Study of Community Colleges, Los Angeles, Calif.
PUB DATE 6 Jun 86
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; *College Instruction; Community Colleges; *Course Content; Instructional Improvement; *Liberal Arts; School Surveys; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teaching Methods; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Santa Monica College CA

ABSTRACT

A survey of instructors at Santa Monica College (SMC), in California, was conducted by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges to gather information on liberal arts instruction, course content, goals, and teaching patterns. With support from SMC administrators and liberal arts department heads, interviews were conducted with 23 instructors, including one or two teachers per discipline in the liberal arts and sciences. Survey findings included the following: (1) a majority of the instructors had attended universities in southern California; (2) among the instructors' major instructional goals were to introduce students to college-level work, expand students' horizons, and encourage students to take responsibility for their learning; (3) instructional assistance varied on a departmental basis, with most instructors in the Earth Sciences Department having teaching assistants and no instructors in the Speech, Psychology, Studio Art, or Foreign Language Departments having assistants; (4) among the instructional changes noted were greater leniency in grading, lessening of the volume of reading assignments, and shorter, more frequent tests; (5) there was a trend toward adding laboratory and field sections in anthropology, biology, geography, and some areas of music; (6) faculty were permitted to attract students to new courses using flyers or in-class presentations; (7) instructors reviewed up to 40 textbooks per semester for possible use in their next semester's class; (8) an average of four to eight exams were given each semester; (9) instructors indicated that their biggest problems in teaching were related to unmotivated, underprepared, and uninterested students; (10) instructors felt problems could be ameliorated through reduced course loads, time off to develop new courses, higher salaries, and student screening; and (11) the extent of professional involvement of an instructor within his/her field was linked to educational background. (EJV)

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. M. COHEN

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

SURVEY OF INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS, COURSE CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY
A CASE STUDY CONDUCTED AT
SANTA MONICA COLLEGE, SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA
SPRING, 1986

BY BILL COHEN
FOR THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

June 6, 1986

ED269104

JC 860 254

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SURVEY QUESTIONS	3
METHODOLOGY	5
SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS	8
CASE STUDY DATA	21

INSTRUCTOR SURVEY

INSTRUCTOR NAME

PRIMARY AREA OF INSTRUCTION

COURSES TAUGHT THIS SEMESTER

COURSES TAUGHT AT OTHER TIMES

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND AND COURSES TAUGHT

WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING? WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR STUDENTS TO GAIN MOST FROM THE CLASS - PROBLEM SOLVING, AESTHETIC TASTE BUILDING, CHRONOLOGY, ETC.? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO EFFECT, TO MAKE HAPPEN, HOW ARE YOU TRYING TO CHANGE STUDENTS?

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF CLASS TIME IS DEVOTED TO THE VARIOUS TEACHING METHODS - GUEST LECTURERS, STUDENT PRESENTATIONS, MEDIA, DISCUSSION, EXAMS? WHAT IS THE FORMAT OF YOUR CLASS?

HOW HAVE THE GOALS, CONTENT AND TEACHING METHODS OF YOUR CLASSES CHANGED DURING THE PAST DECADE?

WHAT ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE TO YOU - TUTORS, MEDIA, CLERICAL, ETC? DO YOU GRADE YOUR OWN STUDENTS' PAPERS?

WHAT TEXTS DO YOU USE AND WHY DID YOU SELECT THESE PARTICULAR TEXTS?

WHAT IS THE FORMAT OF TESTS YOU ADMINISTER? ARE YOU TESTING FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS IN GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION?

ARE YOUR STUDENTS MORE INTERESTED IN MEMORIZING FACTUAL INFORMATION FOR USE IN TESTING THAN IN LEARNING TO THINK ABOUT LARGER, CONCEPTUAL ISSUES AND APPLICATIONS?

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF FUNDING ON CURRICULUM? DOES THIS INFLUENCE YOUR ABILITY TO HIRE SPEAKERS, OBTAIN MEDIA OR BUILD A GOOD LIBRARY COLLECTION IN YOUR DISCIPLINE?

WHAT NEW COURSES WERE INITIATED AND WHY WERE THEY DEVELOPED? WHAT IS THE APPROVAL PROCESS?

WHAT ARE THE ENROLLMENT TRENDS DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS IN YOUR SUBJECT?

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS YOU FACE IN TEACHING THIS COURSE?

WHICH OF THE COURSES YOU TEACH IS THE MOST POPULAR AND WHY? WHAT ARE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL THINGS YOU DO? WHAT GIVES YOU THE MOST SATISFACTION?

WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIELD?
HAVE YOU INVESTIGATED ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER ISSUES BETWEEN YOUR
OWN INSTITUTION AND OTHER 4-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE
AREA?

METHODOLOGY

The first step of the survey project was to gain permission to conduct the project on the campus of Santa Monica College. A letter to Richard Moore, President of the College, from Arthur Cohen, President of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges outlined some of the goals and working methods of the project. Our overall purpose was to collect information on liberal arts instruction including course content, goals and teaching patterns. The procedure would be to discuss the topics of curriculum, goals and pedagogy informally with instructors. No attempt would be made to get a representative sample; rather the interviewer would simply speak with as many instructors as he found feasible between the initial date of the study (the eighth week of class) and the end of the spring semester in June. The interviewer would attempt to determine what changes had taken place in the goals and content of courses in the humanities, social sciences, and physical and life sciences at Santa Monica College in the past decade. The names of the instructors interviewed would remain anonymous in the final report.

The initial plan of approaching the assignment was twofold - a quick literature survey on the American Community college, instructor surveys, and liberal arts education in the two-year college was undertaken before interviewing instructors. Simultaneously, the interviewer began to get a quick overview of the layout of the campus and its administrative hierarchy. In the first few days of the survey project, the interviewer was advised to read Earl Seidman's In the Words of the Faculty on instructor attitudes in the community college. He then read The Humanities in Two-Year Colleges: What affects the Program? on reasons for successful or unsuccessful humanities programs, and Cohen and Brawer's The American Community College for an overview of the history and various other general aspects of the community college. The interviewer then went to the college library to review the literature on the school itself. A report on the 1980 self-study for accreditation was read. At the same time, mornings and afternoons were devoted to contacting department heads, instructors, and learning the locations of various major campus buildings and departments.

An interview with Dr. Rocky Young, the Administrative Dean of Instruction, was arranged early in the project, for his approval of the project and the goals and methodology of the survey. Since the survey did not call for instructors to fill out forms or undertake a series of lengthy interviews, the project was granted immediate permission. Approval was then sought from the individual liberal arts department heads. The willingness of department heads to participate in the survey was readily given. In smaller departments, the department heads often noticed a passing instructor and pulled him over for an interview on the spot. The interviewer became very aware of pressing time schedules of these instructors, so appointments were usually set up for the following morning. This also gave instructors some time to think a bit about the project beforehand. Occasionally a copy of the instructor survey

questions was furnished in advanced to instructors, if they wished to see them.

In the case of larger departments instructors were selected who had obvious or outspoken opinions about curriculum and instruction. Although this might be construed by some as changing the data somewhat, the survey was not aiming for a representative sample. The interviewer therefore could take the opportunity to speak with instructors who were especially interested and knowledgeable about the topic of teaching. At this point, the selection of questions was refined so that only the most relevant, interesting and thought-provoking questions were isolated and so that the interview would take only a maximum of 20-30 minutes of time. Questions which were non-statistical and easily answerable were selected. An early methodological policy of attending at least one of the instructor's classes to see how their ideas were put into practice was abandoned because of lack of time. The interviewer also attempted to gain an insider's point of view as a participant observer by volunteering to serve as a student teacher in his field of expertise, but was not successful in finding a teacher who would consent to act as a supervisor, even though the idea was accepted in principle by the department head.

Interviews were conducted with 23 instructors. A balance was sought only in terms of interviewing at least one or two instructors per discipline in the liberal arts and sciences and an equal number of instructors in the humanities, social sciences and physical and life sciences. Instructors were not selected on the basis of age, sex, numbers per discipline or percentage of the total number of instructors at the college. The sample was slightly influenced by the unwillingness of instructors in some departments to participate in the survey, but usually at least one member of the department could be found to interview for the project. The most time-consuming aspect of the project was arranging the interview around instructor schedules. Notes were taken by hand to avoid the intimidation of the tape recorder and the amount of time necessary to transcribe tapes.

After interviewing teachers, notes were compiled on responses in a narrative form usually filling four to six single-spaced typewritten pages per instructor, reconstituting responses in a readable form. These individual case studies form the bulk of the report but are not available to readers because confidentiality was assured to the interviewees. It became apparent that even with the use of coded names, most instructors at the college would recognize a particular colleague's response from the small department size and his background.

Once the interviews with individual instructors were composed and typed, general trends at the college were discovered and the information was synthesized by re-reading each of the instructor responses to a given question. Discussions on how to present and disseminate the information were held at the Center for the Study of Community Colleges. On June 4, 1986, the survey results were presented by the interviewer, Bill Cohen and the Director of the

Center, Arthur Cohen to Santa Monica College President, Richard Moore. Discussions centered on instructor responses to the question of how to improve teaching at the school. The point of view of the Administration is not included in this report, which concentrates exclusively on the faculty viewpoints.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Interviews were conducted and reports were prepared on 23 of the faculty at the college. No attempt was made to obtain a representative sample of instructors in terms of percentage of faculty interviewed, nor were faculty selected by area of instruction, race, sex or other factors. The survey merely tried to include as many instructors as possible within the six-week time frame of the survey and to include as many of the liberal arts and sciences disciplines as possible.

The survey found that a majority of the instructors attended universities in southern California. This fact becomes significant when discussing articulation and transfer because most of the faculty claimed they were aware of articulation issues and already knew the types of preparation that other southern California colleges desired students from SMC to have.

Although it was not required, a majority of the instructors in the departments of anthropology and foreign language now hold the doctorate. Many instructors who teach a full-time load also teach courses at other schools.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

The first and perhaps the most important question asked in the interview was, "What is your philosophy of teaching? In other words, what are your goals in teaching this class? How are you trying to change students? What are you trying to effect, to make happen?" After reviewing results, the survey was able to pinpoint nine principle instructional goals which teachers at the college consistently strove to effect in students:

- 1) Introduction to what a college level course is like
- 2) Expanding student horizons
 - a) Exposure to concepts, thought and issues not previously discovered by students.
- 3) Encouraging students to become self-learners
 - a) Teaching students to become more responsible for their own education.
 - b) Fostering commitment to the learning process.
 - c) Instilling a love for learning, developing an approach to life, a thirst for knowledge, and an understanding and appreciation for art and literature.

- 4) Mastery of a body of knowledge or a technical skill
 - a) Ability to formulate questions and solve problems.
 - b) Experience a sense of accomplishment of doing "quality work."
- 5) Increasing student understanding of the environment which surrounds them.
 - a) Sense of scale and place in the universe, (astronomy) in the natural world, (geology, biology, geography, botany, chemistry) and in the social world of man (anthropology, sociology, psychology, anatomy, physiology, history, philosophy, economics, etc.)
- 6) Increase students' sense of personal responsibility
 - a) Knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of free communication.
 - b) Understanding of political and economic issues, creation of a slightly skeptical cast of mind.
 - c) Direct personal involvement in social issues.
 - d) Building of tolerance through understanding of cultural relativism and cross-cultural points of view.
- 7) Learning to conceptualize, criticize, and evaluate
 - a) Learning to ask intelligent questions
 - b) Organization of data, effective communication skills
 - c) Building conceptual and critical thinking skills
 - d) Ability to evaluate speeches and media.
- 8) Ability to state and solve problems
 - a) Ability to design an experiment to test a hypothesis.
 - b) Problem solving within the context of a discipline.
- 9) Application of principles and problem solving abilities to life and work
 - a) Use of skills developed in foreign languages, economics, political science, psychology, English, speech, music, etc.
 - b) Building of self-confidence.
 - c) Approach to dealing and coping with real-life situations.
 - d) Long-term retention of knowledge and life-long interest in the field.

ASSISTANCE

The survey found that test graders and readers were used frequently before funding cuts instituted by Proposition 13. Instructors complained most frequently about the workload of grading tests and reading papers, but chose to continue to read their own students'

work, even when assistance was offered to them, because they feared the quality of feedback would not be as in-depth or consistent.

Assistance available to instructors varied on a departmental basis. Most instructors in the Earth Sciences Department had teaching assistants to help with grading exams, assigned projects and papers. Part-time and first-year, full-time instructors did not have assistants available to them. In the life sciences departments, technicians were used to set up laboratory experiments and student assistants were sometimes used to help clean up. Occasionally, some teachers used students to grade papers, but while all instructors claimed that other professors used student help in grading, no one interviewed claimed to do that now. The English Department formerly had assistants, but now does not; the Social Sciences Department also does not, but formerly had a well-articulated program of student teachers from UCLA. Speech, psychology, studio art and foreign language departments had no readers or graders, and paid individual instruction in music is apparently against the law.

CHANGES IN TEACHING

Changes in teaching goals, methods, and course content at SMC during the last decade have occurred as a result of changing student demographics, level of preparation and national changes within various disciplines. Student preparation for college level courses may have been as adequate as ever, but there were larger numbers of remedial and lower level class sections offered in response to demand. Students were accommodated by more lenient grading standards, a lessening of the volume of reading assignments and shorter, more frequent tests. The introduction of the calculator may have resulted in some students losing the ability to think mathematically. There was a trend in all of the liberal arts and sciences toward the emphasis of conceptual learning and applications over the memorization of factual data. Better film and video equipment and audio-visual tutorials were developed and there is and will be a greater use of the microcomputer in laboratory learning situations, especially as textbooks begin to come with software packages. Less straight lecture was done by instructors and more small group discussion, presentations, and experiential learning were encouraged to promote greater long-term retention in classes for non-majors.

Many of the changes in approach to teaching have occurred within the disciplines themselves.

* In foreign languages there has been a shift toward a classroom situation in which all communication, explanations, readings, discussions and testing are done in the target language. This method is known as the direct or natural method of language acquisition and was adopted by departmental vote at the college because the method seemed to promote retention of material the best.

* In music, more class sections offered meant a greater enrichment of the learning process through higher standards and more advanced and specialized classes. Some instructors attempted to make classes more relevant to students by discussing how to get a job in the field of music or offering instruction in popular guitar, synthesizer, and improvisation. Mastery of a technical skill is still more important to instructional goals than an integrated humanities approach in music theory classes.

* In literature courses there was a trend away from the chronological toward the thematic approach.

* Less memorization of factual information was required in history, philosophy, and geography, which now stress conceptual learning skills.

* Geography is now taught more as a "hard science" than as a social science.

* In English and psychology, students were asked to become more involved by giving oral presentations, dividing themselves into study groups, taking field trips, and designing their own experiential internships. Examples used in class now attempt to touch the students' own lives through discussion of current events. Instructors are attempting to impress students that they should take greater responsibility for their own education.

* In the sciences, such as biology, there was a split between classes for majors and non-majors.

* More observation, less dissection and less memorization was done in biology. Greater value was placed on conceptual learning and applications. The total volume of reading assignments has been reduced.

* Students became more interested in studying physical anthropology than cultural anthropology at the college. In physical anthropology, students became less interested in the pre-hominid fossil origins of man and more interested in genetics.

* Fewer changes occurred in the fields of math, speech, music theory and sociology.

* Older teachers claimed the only change in their teaching is that they have become better teachers - more confident in their subject and more efficient at presenting and distilling materials for students. Teachers who change and adapt more readily seem to have fewer years experience as teachers.

NEW COURSES

Numerous new classes were instituted and it was rare to find an instructor who had been at the college for more than a year who had

not attempted to initiate a new course for approval. Most of these new courses were accepted after a rigorous approval process which included peer and departmental review, examination by a curriculum committee and faculty senate and investigation by the Vice President for Instruction and the President of the College.

New, specialized courses were initiated when student enrollments could justify offering the classes, especially in biology, literature, history, philosophy, music and art history, or when the course was not considered competitive with courses traditionally offered at the four-year college level. In the latter case, advanced level courses would not be granted approval if students could not get transfer credit for taking them in their major field of study.

There was a trend toward adding laboratory and field sections in anthropology, biology, geography and some areas of music, such as keyboard improvisation. Instructors also expressed a desire to integrate lecture and laboratory sections and to have the same instructor teach both lecture and lab sections.

The proliferation of regional and ethnic studies courses in history, anthropology, sociology, child development, and religion offered in the late 1960's began to be curtailed in favor of integrating course content into introductory level classes.

Changes within various disciplines took their cues from the university in the re-thinking of the year-long general biology sequence for majors.

Many instructors managed to skirt the time-consuming approval process for new courses by offering the new class or approach under an old course name. Interesting new approaches were instituted in this manner in English composition and literature and psychology. In biology, field courses to natural environments not listed in the catalog were approved under general field course names. In cases where the idea or inspiration for a new course emanated from the administration, such as in "Biology for the Blind," the lengthy approval process was also minimized. A college-wide policy allowed teaching of courses on virtually any topic within the scope of existing departments on a one-semester only trial basis without official approval from a curriculum committee.

Faculty were allowed to attempt to attract students to their new courses by various marketing techniques such as flyers or in-class presentations.

Among the motivations listed for developing new courses were attracting students to departments with declining enrollments, instructor interest in teaching advanced level courses in their subject area, and addressing the needs of remedial students in math or English or the needs of advanced students in math, foreign, language and music.

TEXTBOOK SELECTION

Instructors at the college were very concerned with texts used in their courses and were constantly reviewing up to 40 books per semester as for possible use in the next semester's class. Most instructors at the college had complete freedom to choose the books they wanted students to read, except teachers in the departments of speech, psychology, music, and foreign language, where texts were selected by departmental vote. Often texts were changed every two years, especially in dynamically changing disciplines, such as astronomy and economics.

Criteria used by instructors in text selection were as varied as the books themselves, but there were some consistent reasons given which transcended disciplinary boundaries.

Among the most frequently cited criteria for selection of books were texts which offered a sophisticated approach to problem solving or which presented information, examples, and questions at the highest level that students could understand. For instance, in music, texts were selected which gave examples in the keys other than the traditionally easy to understand key signatures of C, F or G, in math, books were sought which employed larger numbers in equations, and in the social sciences, texts which used the most sophisticated and advanced language to convey information which was comprehensible to students were sought.

However, instructors were divided over the use of texts which offered an encyclopedic presentation of material as either too intimidating for students or useful in a lifetime program of learning. Most instructors looked for texts which were well written in terms of clarity, organization of material and beauty of language. They also looked for conciseness and balance - the briefest exploration of the subject which at the same time managed to avoid slighting the true importance of each topic. Most teachers had been disappointed in texts which were inaccurate, although otherwise exciting.

Another criteria for text selection was the quality of illustrations, flow charts, diagrams, tables, graphs, and photographs which made reading interesting and exciting. Instructors often chose works which were useful in group or classroom learning situations, and offered practical hands-on experiments, computer software programs for learning, interesting suggestions for field projects and lecture notes and questions at the end of each chapter. In dynamically changing fields, such as economics, astronomy and physical anthropology, instructors selected texts with the most recent possible publication date, while teachers of skill courses such as speech and music theory were often wary of changing texts. Teachers in the social sciences, such as psychology, sociology or cultural anthropology tended to select works which avoided what was perceived as sexist, racist, sensationalistic, or ethnocentric language and selected books which incorporated cross-cultural comparisons with non-Western societies.

Instructors also looked for books which incorporated examples which were directly relevant to students or touched their lives, such as useful, realistic dialogs in foreign language texts, or works written by California-based authors in local government, geography, geology, biology, and botany.

Some instructors, particularly those in the fields of integrated humanities or cultural anthropology, looked for in-depth discussions of particular selected artistic accomplishments or ethnographies of a single tribe.

In courses in which multiple texts were used, such as literature, history and philosophy, books were chosen which together presented the widest possible range of different points of view, to impart an idea of the complexity of the subject under study or the variety of treatments of a literary theme. In foreign languages, instructors voted on selection of a text which followed the departmental philosophy of natural language acquisition and which was consistent with foreign language texts used at other schools in the area, which students were likely to encounter in their advanced studies of the language. Student opinion on the difficulty of a particular text were sometimes influential enough to cause discontinuance of the text even if the instructor was satisfied with it.

Of course, teachers wanted their textbooks to be all of these things, and inexpensive, too.

TESTS

The study found that an average of 4 to 8 exams were given per semester. No professor interviewed administered less than four tests, usually because students tended to become intimidated by unmanageably large amounts of data retention needed for testing. Besides multiple choice, true/false, short answer, identification and essay tests, significant portions of a student's final grade in class were comprised of individual or group oral presentations, research papers, laboratory experiments or field reports. Many teachers resented the large percentage of the class period spent in taking tests, which represented from 1/8th to 1/4th of the total class time in the 18 week semester. However, some teachers in math and philosophy gave a short quiz at the beginning of every class session to make sure students arrived on time and were prepared with the previous night's assignments. Most teachers would rather have spent time lost in giving tests by introducing new material. Also, some instructors did not believe in the notion that students learn through the act of taking a test, except in placement tests.

One of the biggest problems for instructors was the enormous amount of time necessary to grade tests, especially narrative tests, such as essays, term papers, library research papers, field studies, and laboratory reports. When a teacher was confronted with 120 essays

to read seven times during a semester, burn-out was likely to occur. Many teachers understood that students need practice in writing, but large class size was often coped with by teachers by machine-gradable scoring at the expense of practice in writing. The lack of time for careful reading and thorough feedback also meant that many teachers outside of the English Department were not at all concerned with testing for grammar and composition skills.

On the other hand, most teachers did not use teaching assistants, readers, technicians, student help, test graders or other assistants in grading even if this assistance was offered to them. Instructors felt it was their duty to keep up with special individual or group problems in comprehending material. They felt that student problems could only truly be understood by doing their own grading and they did not trust the consistency, dependability or background preparation of other people in grading their students' work.

Field reports emphasizing experiential learning were required in psychology and geography, laboratory reports in biology, anatomy, and physiology, and written outlines in speech.

Teachers claim that there is a movement toward testing for conceptual learning over the memorization of factual data, and some classes have moved toward a more integrated, holistic approach. However, skills courses often do not require any essay tests. Many science teachers stressed an interest in having students master conceptual learning in order to successfully deal with various applications of knowledge in their future careers.

PROBLEMS

When asked what were the biggest problems they faced in teaching their classes, instructor responses were surprisingly consistent. For most instructors, the greatest problem in teaching was the audience - teachers become quite demoralized when students take a class to get a grade yet are unwilling to work for it. Most teachers are upset at the significant numbers of students they feel do not belong in a college class, but come to school to socialize, or because they are subsidized if they stay in school or because they just don't know what else to do with themselves. Most teachers at the college think that the school is unusual in the wide variety of student backgrounds and preparation, making it especially difficult to teach skills courses such as mathematics, music, chemistry and foreign language. Student backgrounds and abilities vary enormously in age, academic preparation, emotional maturity, social class and ethnic background. Some students are native speakers of a foreign language or handicapped or returning students already holding advanced degrees. Teachers find it frustrating that it is impossible or illegal to screen students from any community college class. There is also a large and continuing drop-out rate approaching 50% in some classes, resulting in over-filling in the first few weeks of school and lack of sufficient attention to individual student academic problems. On the bright side,

disciplinary problems were mentioned by only one teacher in the survey.

Teachers also cite a decline in reading and math skills, diminishing attention span of the "TV generation" and lack of interest in coursework. Some students persist in seeking a pathway requiring only the most minimal effort necessary to obtain a grade, expressing a desire to memorize factual material over conceptual knowledge and applications.

Another consistent theme expressed by teachers was a problem with the amount of courses required for a full-time load and the large numbers of students in each class section. This results in exhaustion and resentment of lack of personal time, insufficient time to read or take courses to keep up to date with new developments in the field, and lack of time to present these developments to the class or to create new courses.

Finally, some instructors expressed resentment at lack of adequate staff development, in terms of paid sabbaticals, salary, incentives, and anger at suppression of creativity, bureaucratic red tape or an overly politicized department.

Only once did an instructor mention that his biggest problem in teaching was how to adequately present a concise and well-balanced introductory course in what seemed to be a very large subject.

And of course, some instructors claimed to have no problems at all with funding, student backgrounds, attitudes, staff development, course load or their own preparation for teaching.

WHAT COULD BE DONE BY YOU OR ANYONE ELSE TO MAKE YOUR COURSES BETTER?

Suggestions on how to ameliorate complaints voiced in response to the question, "What are the biggest problems you face in teaching this course?" should be evident from that section of the report immediately above. To summarize, teachers are consistently asking for:

- 1) Reduced course load
- 2) Time off to develop new courses, conduct their own research, keep up with the field by reading or taking classes, and for personal growth and enrichment.
- 3) Higher salaries
- 4) Pre-screening of student abilities by counseling, testing and placement in order to have students make full use of the courses taught.

5) Greater departmental support for learning materials. Among these are computer hardware and software for use in the Learning Resources Center, and microcomputers in departmental offices for use in editing articles, preparing course outlines, tests and reducing the load of bureaucratic paperwork. Some instructors would also like a separate computer laboratory for classroom use in regular daytime hours.

Video equipment and monitors with instant playback were desired by the Speech Department so students can get immediate feedback on their appearance before an audience.

Instructors are also asking for support for better audio-visual tutorials in the sciences, musical equipment such as synthesizers and recording machines, more practice rooms for music students, and better staff offices in the cramped Social Studies Department.

Some instructors have voiced a need for a greater library acquisition budget in their discipline. Student assistants are desired by some, but not all of the faculty.

Increased funding is not the only solution to requests from teachers. English instructors would like to see better coordination between their instructional goals in teaching grammar and composition and writing requirements in other departments. Better coordination between different departments, with the Learning Resources Center, and between teachers, tutors and student assistants was also desired by instructors. Humanities instructors would like a greater ability to organize field study trips and teachers of physical anthropology would like a laboratory component added to their classes. Biology teachers voiced a desire to have integrated lecture and laboratory sections as other science departments at the school have, and to have the same instructor teach both the lecture and lab sections of the class. Especially innovative teachers stressed the need for departmental incentives for better teachers.

WHAT IS THE MOST POPULAR COURSE YOU TEACH AND WHY?

Instructor perceptions of the reasons behind why certain of their courses tended to be more popular than others fell into two categories - 1) significantly higher enrollments reflecting introductory level or required courses and 2) student satisfaction with higher level courses representing their reaching a stage of personal achievement and growth.

Examples of the latter case include the popularity of the first level calculus course in mathematics because it is considered to represent reaching a plateau in math education and because it is the lowest level math course transferable to a four-year college.

In history and philosophy, the Philosophy 3 course (Ancient and Medieval History and Philosophy) was considered by the instructor to

be his most popular course because it captured the imagination of students, because of his obvious enthusiasm in teaching it and because it was easier to develop a consensus on what the most important issues of the subject were, as opposed to to the study of pure history, where the subject looms endlessly large.

In English, one of the more popular courses is studying British Literature abroad in England, because of the exotic nature of travel.

In geography, the Weather and Climate course is the most popular course, but the instructor considered this merely a fad. In the 1960's his most popular course was cultural geography, and he expects a shift back to this in the future with changing student attitudes.

In piano, the introductory class has the highest enrollment because it fulfills a general fine arts requirement. But the class students get most excited about is the Keyboard Improvisation class, because students are interested in the popular styles of music such as rock and jazz, which are heavily oriented toward improvisation. Students are also excited about obtaining access to expensive and thrilling musical equipment, such as synthesizers and dubbing machines.

PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE AND IN ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER ISSUES

One set of questions asked was, "What is the extent of your professional involvement in your field? Do you engage in research or publishing activities or attend conferences and present papers? Have you investigated articulation and transfer requirements between your own institution and other four-year colleges and universities in southern California?"

The extent of professional involvement of an instructor within his or her own discipline and among fellow educators was found to be linked to some extent with educational background. Instructors who held the doctorate were more likely to be actively conducting research, publishing in the field, presenting papers at conferences, and joining associations devoted to researching and disseminating information on the improvement of teaching techniques within the discipline. Fields in which many members of the department had a PhD included anthropology and foreign languages.

Professional involvement was by no means limited to professors with PhD's. Many teachers, perhaps 1/4th of those interviewed, were in some way involved in research, publishing, or transfer issues. Many instructors attended conferences in their fields, especially if their departments paid for travel expenses. Research on improving teaching methods was encouraged by some departments, such as English and Foreign Language. Piano teachers gave recitals, dance choreography and theater teachers gave performances, art historians gave public lectures, studio artists displayed their work, and

faculty of the English Department developed a writer's group and published a newsletter about the teaching of English. However, the majority of the faculty felt no particular pressure to publish in the field, and even composition and literature teachers understood their primary responsibility to be the act of teaching.

Articulation and transfer

Most instructors discussed teaching methods, goals, and objectives with colleagues and other members of their own departments on an informal or semi-formal basis, but made little attempt to contact their counterparts at other institutions. Many instructors stated that the reason for their lack of effort at investigating whether the courses they taught adequately prepared students or fulfilled transfer requirements at other schools was that they already knew what was required by other schools. This was because most instructors had attended universities in southern California or had taught previously or concurrently at these other schools. Some teachers had visited other schools to discuss transfer requirements in the past, but had not done so lately. Most instructors claimed to have heard only positive feedback from returning students who had gone on to successfully complete baccalaureate degrees at other schools. Many instructors in the sciences felt that courses offered at SMC were superior to the identical ones taught at universities, where classes were shorter, had more students, and were more competitive and impersonal. Most science classes offered at the school were transferable, however. These classes were taught without math prerequisites in biology, anatomy, physiology, astronomy, geography and anthropology.

The development of a special honors program called "The Scholar's Program" has done much to foster coordination between departments and institutions. Students at the college who take a series of special rigorous courses designed for honor students and who complete a minimum of 24 units with a grade of 3.0 or above are guaranteed admission to equivalent departments, or in some cases the whole school, at most nearby institutions of higher learning. Instructors from the departments of English, biology, art, music, theater and dance were involved in setting up the program.

Besides the Scholar's Program, notable examples of coordination between institutions were observed in the biology Department, which reorganized its one year biology course for majors through a series of ongoing discussions with UCLA.

COMPARISON OF FINDINGS AT THE COLLEGE WITH NATIONAL TRENDS

It is important to remember that information summarized in this survey reflects the point of view of instructors interviewed. Although attempts could be made to refine these figures and attitudes by speaking with administrators, students and directors of adjunct and support programs, the scope of the survey was limited to full-time day faculty.

Information collected from the faculty at this one community college in southern California very closely corroborates the general faculty trends discussed by Cohen and Brawer in The American Community College and the findings of a nationwide instructor survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges in the Spring of 1978. This latter study sampled the attitudes of faculty teaching the sciences in 15% of the community colleges in the United States. The nationwide science instructor survey found that a majority of the faculty wanted their students above all to be able to apply principles learned in the course to solve qualitative or quantitative problems, and to develop critical thinking abilities. Class time was still largely spent in the lecture/discussion format, especially in the social sciences, with math, philosophy and other skills classes devoting up to 20% of class time to questions, discussion and working problems. Student and media presentations in class were utilized more frequently at SMC than the national average which the 1978 study reports as "sparingly." This is perhaps accounted for by a growing philosophy among instructors at SMC that students should learn to become more responsible for their own education, that experiential learning promotes greater long-term retention of data, and a significant nationwide increase in the frequency of use of media in the last eight years as a result of the information revolution sparked by computerization and better audio-visual hardware and programs.

Faculty at SMC exactly parallel the nationwide sample of instructors in their determination of what it would take to make their classes better. "Students better prepared to handle course requirements," "Instructor release time to develop course and/or material" and "Availability of more media" topping the list in the 1978 study were all frequently mentioned by instructors at SMC. Instructors at the college were all very satisfied with the media provided them, perhaps reflecting the relative wealth of the school district and the more collegiate orientation of the college as compared to the national sample.